

critical digest

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T. M. KRAUS

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NEW YORK THEATRE WEEK

Mrs. Patterson- National 12/1. Leonard Sillman presents a new play by Charles Sebree and Greer Johnson with incidental music by James Shelton. Eartha Kitt, Enid Markay featured... Hit the Trail-Hellinger 12/2. Elizabeth Miele presents musical based on story by William Anthony McGuire, adapted by Frank O'Neill. Changed title recently from "On With The Show." Irra Petina, Robert Wright, Paul Valentine featured. ...High Handed Today- De Lys 12/10. New play by David Goodman with Art Smith, Dorothy Blackburn, Darrell Richards, Rita Celyon and Don Freed.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

Wedding Breakfast- 48th St- 11/20. Majority of NY daily critics thoroughly enjoyed 4 character comedy by Theodore Reeves, produced by Kemit Bloomgarden. Beautifully produced, staged and acted they agreed. Virginia Vincent, Lee Grant, Harvey Lembeck and Anthony Franciosa shared plaudits. Herman Shumlin directed. But Watts, Post, and McClain, Journal American, vetoed production as not being big enough or funny enough. Atkinson, Times, summed up the majority verdict by stating show is a miniature play about undistinguished people, but written and acted with insight, principle and admiration. Kerr, Herald Tribune, approved but he had to overlook the serious problem imposed in third act. Chapman, News, also okayed it with reservations, he had wished for a little more energy. Coleman, Mirror, credits the director with doing much to pull together a choppy and episodic script.

Sandhog- Phoenix 11/23. Times and Mirror aisle-sitters only daily critics to approve of Earl Robinson-Waldo Salt musical based on Dreiser's story "St. Columba and the River", and both of them had mild complaints. Enterprising, versatile and original musical comedy, noted Atkinson, Times, though he feared score was not exactly inspired. Jack Cassidy, Betty Oakes, David Brooks, Alice Ghostley and sidewalk game dances were all praised. Admitting show is a bit on the arty and pretentious side, Coleman, Mirror, still found much of it moving and amusing. On the "con" side, Kerr, Herald Tribune, thought the elements were almost uniformly impressive, but the show has a heavy heart. Unexciting, summed up Chapman, News, while McClain, Journal American, blamed failure on a pedestrian idea. Phoenix, fears Watts, Post, is still suffering from second-season pains, show lacks final touch of creative imagination that might have turned it from a worthy effort into an exciting achievement.

One Eye Closed- Bijou 11/24-11/25. On-stage horse which left after first act won top prize in new farce by Justin Sturm which closed after 3 performances. Haila Stoddard, producer, subbed for ill Constance Ford on opening night and received an A. for effort. Critics unanimously panned show as plain unfunny. Not much amusement, politely noted Times man. Chapman, News, did find some funny lines, but not enough to last the evening. Inspite of poor play, Coleman, Mirror, labeled author a writer to watch. McClain, Journal American, found it tough enough to keep one eye OPEN. Outlandish and farfetched, instead of funny or farcical, reports Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Tom Helmore and Parker McCormick were credited by most with good tries. But next to horse, the on-stage 1903 Winton car belonging to James Melton won the best notices.

" Off Broadway "

Phoenix Theatre will follow with Shaw's The Doctor's Dilemma and Ibsen's The Master Builder, latter opening March 1...Morris Carnovsky joins cast of The Dybbuk replacing Ludwig Donath, Abie's Irish Rose...Pearl Schner has replaced Anna Minot in Sands of the Negev...High Named Today, next show at Theatre De Lys Dec 10 entered rehearsals...Nancy Wickwire, Way of the World, named "Star of Tomorrow" by "Theatre Arts"...Take a Giant Step directed by TV director Ira Cinker plays Dec 1-5 at Equity Library.

Tennessee Williams' Camino Real will be presented by Columbia University Players Dec 15-19...Originals Only will present Streetcar Named Desire Mondays thru Fridays starting about Dec 20, and continue The Chair for 5 performances weekends. House switches from "contributions" to paid admissions.

The Girl From Samos presented at Labor Temple, 14th St and 2nd Ave, by Ida Ehlich's Everyman's Theatre, won recommendation of Atkinson, Times. Fragments of ancient Greek play are interesting, he noted, because they bring to light the mind of an intelligent Greek dramatist and a casual slice of Athenian life. Critic praised high school teacher who pays for entire production and does most of the work. Kerner, Women's Wear okayed it as a current item of unpretentious entertainment and academic interest.

The Importance of Being Earnest production at Provincetown Playhouse won a mild notice from Herridge, Post. Inspite of some unevenness in style and a falling short on psychical appearance, the cast handle Wilde's repartee with light assurance.

Twelfth Night production at Jan Bus was enjoyed by Wattie Post, who praised them for presenting a comedy he is not very fond of with charm and brightness. "D.E.", Women's Wear, also enjoyed the truly professional production done with skill and imagination.

" Futures "

Dec 8	BAD SEED	46th St
Dec 13	LUNATICS*LOVERS-Broadhurst	
Dec 14	HELLO PARIS	
Dec 15	BLACK EYED SUSAN-Playhouse	
Dec 16	WITNESS FOR PROSECUTION	
Dec 19	STARS IN PERSONS BACKYARD	
Dec 21	PORTRAIT OF LADY- ANTA	
Dec 21	ANASTASIA	
Dec 22	WHAT EVERY WOMAN-City C.	
Dec 23	HOUSE FLOWERS Alvin	
Dec 27-	SAINT OF BLEECKER ST	
Dec 28	FLOWERING PEACH- Belasco	
Jan 4	PURPLE DUST Bijou	
Jan 5	TIME OF LIFE City C.	
Jan 11	DOCTOR'S DILEMMA Phoenix	
Jan 12	FESTIVAL	
Jan 19	FOURPOSTER City C.	
Jan 20	PALIN & FANCY	
Jan 26	DESPERATE HOURS	

" Theatre TV Comments "

Best Foot Forward presented on NBC TV by Max Leibman won split notices from NY TV critics. All did agree that young British actress Jeannie Carson stole the show. While most also agreed that production was obvious and standard. Production numbers, added Gould, Times, were gay and lovely as seen on his home color TV set. But O'Brian, Journal American, thought it was all dull and devoid of the youthful fling of the original. Variety mugg found it a big disappointment mostly because it is dated to start with.

Let's Face It presented on NBC was termed best production of year by Variety reviewer Bert Lahr won top praise. Crosby, Herald Tribune, disagreed, panned it as having four times more plot than a Broadway musical needs, and ten times too much for a 1 hour TV musical.

TUNE WRCA Ben Grauer 7 30 AM day after a Broadway opening for quotes of reviews complied by "C.D."

' Green Room Department '

HOW TO BUY TICKETS...Best way to buy theatre tickets, Post 6 part survey on situation concludes, is to buy them by mail the minute you see the first advance advertisements in the newspapers. But don't expect to get precisely what you ask for and don't be too precise or you will get no money back. The only other way is to wait until the last minute, shop the brokers or if you have to, pay the scalper's prices.

COLUMN TIPS...House of Flowers understudies are so good, tips Winchell, that leads will not miss any shows...Kim Hunter, Tender Trap, has had to turn down 3 film offers ...Broadway's most sizzling feud, reports Kilgallen, is between GUTHRIE McCARTIN and Charles Sebree of Mrs. Patterson.

WHY THEATRE?...Informal survey of what people want in theatre conducted by McClain, Journal American. Something very big with great music and a lot of beautiful broads, said a taxi driver. Problem plays that produce arguments, said a society-type intellectual. An area for exploitation of ideas, said an advertising man.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Art, not artiness, is what the public wants, comments Coleman, Mirror, in approving choice of Phoenix of Doctor's Dilemma...Watts, Post, can't help wondering what kind of play Graham Greene, Living Room, would write if he hated the religion he is said to love...Theatre should be thankful for the freedom won within the past 25 years, states Burr, Playbill, in recalling that What Price Glory was attacked from street corners and pulpits.

MAIL BAG...A theatre fan for 35 years writes to Times that he is forced to say goodbye to the theatre because of today's stratospheric box office prices. Now when second balcony seats cost as much as pre-war orchestra seats, he will hole up before the TV set, go to the movies and patronize the Off Broadway shows.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Abrasha, food and alarm clocks are the three important things in Geraldine Page, The Rainmaker, life she told McClain, Journal American. Abrasha is her husband, Alexander Schneider, a violinist. Because she loves food she lived downtown in a cheap apartment to have more to spend on eats. As a result she landed lead in Circle in Square Summer and Smoke. Friends have sent her dozens of alarm clocks to wake her up from tight sleep.

' Pros & Cons by TMK '

Sandhog is a delightfully conceived, well executed musical adventure. Cast, setting, direction, dancing (by wonderful kid ballet) are all just about perfect. Granted show has no lavish scene and costume changes, and no chorus of beauties but it will certainly appeal to anyone and everyone who wants something more than surface entertainment in the musical theatre.

The Chair is a strong psychological drama in its 4th month at Originals Only-100 7th Ave South-neat basement playhouse. The evening, which includes food served behind the set, adds up to an interesting, worthwhile Off Broadway experience. Minor

complaints may be voiced against the sins of alternate casting, the weak ending of the drama, and the fact that certain characters shouted too loud. But on the whole The Chair is a well-done, serious drama.

The Sunday followup pieces on plays the critics have already roared once seems unfair and unnecessary. To many it has always seemed like hitting a man when he is down. There must be other subjects for the critics to write on in their Sunday pieces.

Theatre season is being enlivened by the legal dispute of Charles Trenet and Hollo Paree due to open in NYC Dec 14. Trenet, the French singer, was jailed in Montreal on a writ requested by the producers charging the singer with breach of contract. Producer is suing for \$141,000. Trenet was released the following day on a bail of \$25,000 and threatens counter-suits of \$250,000. Singer said union difficulties prevented him from joining cast for Wilmington, Del., opening. Michael Allard replaced him in cast. Singer also charged producers with advertising his name in ads though he had informed them two weeks ago he would not appear.

Plays

Four shows closed- King of Hearts, Fragile Fox, I Feel Wonderful and One Eye Closed...The Champagne Complex will be produced by Gale Stine and star Donald Cook...Kermit Bloomhardt will produce Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl.. I B. Josselow and Albert Lewis will present Remember Me...Madame Butterfly will be presented this spring by Paul Vroom, James Goodman, and Everett Hart...The Flowering Peach now set for Dec 28 at Belesco...The Time of Your Life with Franchot Tone will replace Mister Roberts on City Center schedule.

People

Robert Edmond Jones, 66, died...Noel Coward arrived in NY and denied reports of \$35,000 per week from Las Vegas...Cyril Ritchard, Peter Pan, teaches a class in acting for Restoration comedy at American Theatre Wing...David Wayne and John Forsythe rejoined Teashouse of August Moon after 10 week vacation...Lloyd Gough added to cast of The Bad Seed...Eileen Schauler has replaced Vera Brynner in Hit the Trail ... Maureen Stapleton and Anthony Ross will co-star in 27 Wagons of Cotton, William playlet program produced Jan 17 by James Elliott in New Orleans.

Other Broadways

Rochester Arena Theatre, run for four years by Dorothy Chernuck and Omar Lerman closed after six weeks of poor business...Julius Caesar and The Merchant of Venice will be presented this summer at Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival...Spring Valley NY, High School production of Arsenic and Old Lace which DIDN'T go on because cast didn't know their lines, made the papers.

Theatre Film Notes

Solid Gold Cadillac will be filmed by Columbia with Judy Holliday...Leland Hayward will make film version of Point of No Return...Picnic film will star William Holden...Hal Wallis bought screen rights to The Raimaker for \$350,000..."Joe MacBeth", modern version of Bard's tale, will star John Ireland and Joanne Dru.

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